

July 6, 1968

Approved For Release 2000/08/03 : CIA-RDP75-00001R000100100123-0

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD

APPENDIX

123-0

A3565

**"The President and the Presidency"—
Jack Valenti's Boston Remarks in Full
Text**

EXTENSION OF REMARKS
OF
HON. MICHAEL A. FEIGHAN
OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Monday, June 21, 1965

Mr. FEIGHAN. Mr. Speaker, the remarks of Mr. Jack Valenti, Special Assistant to President Johnson, before the Advertising Federation of America Convention at Boston on June 28, has caused quite a stir. Numerous articles have been written and harpooning cartoons have been drawn about Mr. Valenti's remarks on the subject "The President and the Presidency." Some of the news articles have been uncomplimentary, some lifted out of the full context of his remarks, and some turned into a sharp spear directed at the President himself.

In the last several days I have heard a great deal of talk about Mr. Valenti's remarks and have asked the interested parties whether they had taken the time to read the full text of his remarks. To my amazement I found no one had read the full text, but rather their judgment was being guided only by the piecemeal treatment and selected excerpts they had been reading in the press.

Mr. Speaker, I have taken the time to read in its entirety the prepared remarks of Mr. Valenti on the subject "The President and the Presidency." It carries some very interesting insights on the Presidency which I have not as yet seen in print. I recommend to all who are accustomed to make their own judgments on the basis of all the facts available that they too read the entire text. For the convenience of those interested, by leave obtained, I am inserting at this point in the Record the full text of Mr. Valenti's remarks before the Advertising Federation of America Convention:

The Presidency is a mystical body, constructed by the Constitution, but whose architecture was conceived in the inner crannies of a people's soul.

It is unique—awesome—all embracing, an odd mixture of royal divinity and equalitarian choice—a union between a nation yearning for continuity and its firm resolve not to yield one jot of independence.

Between man's purpose in history and God's purpose in eternity, there is an infinite difference in quality. So it is between what we call our democratic tradition and our appetite for a father to lead us.

To watch the Presidency from afar, as is the lot of most of us, is to perceive the dim, fuzzy outlines, the silhouette of the leader, and to hear only the distant pulsebeat of his activities displayed in the press and on TV.

But no one, not even the perceptive newsmen who sit day in and day out in the west lobby of the west wing of the White House, really know the President's burdens, the abrasive shred of events that beats against him every hour of every day, and through the long night.

There is no sharing of this burden. Each day, thickly crowded with trials and demands for decision, thrusting against him, crying out for attention, finds the President alone, though the rose garden or his office or the Cabinet room is crammed with people. For essentially, though it has become trite to say it, the President is alone, the problem always at flood, the irritations ceaseless, the naggings and the pressures like an uncured rash, and in this age of miracles and madness, the possibility of catastrophe always only a shadow's span away. Other Presidents have complained and philosophized about this strange and transcendent office.

"The business of this office is so oppressive," said John Adams, "I shall hardly support it 2 years longer."

At the end of his second term, Tom Jefferson said: "Five weeks more will relieve me from a drudgery to which I am no longer equal."

"No one," murmured John Quincy Adams, "knows and few conceive the agony of mind that I have suffered from the time I was made by circumstances and not by volition a candidate and then President."

And in a despairing hour during the Civil War, Abe Lincoln cried out "In God's name, if anyone can do better in my place than I have done, let him try his hand at it and no one will be better contented than myself."

And so through our history these men annointed by fate and elections and perhaps divine intervention have applied to higher authorities for help and loudly declared to the electorate their misgivings and their distress over their burdensome office. And each of these men has heard what John Milton called a dismal universal hiss, the sound of public scorn.

And yet, these men have gone on, and as they saw their duty they did it. Some with grace and competence. Others with lifted hopes and stunted skills, but all with that curious up-soaring of mind and spirit that seems, as if by Godly osmosis, to invade the veins of a man the moment he becomes President. It is as if God determined that he would give to the President an extra presence, additional stamina, and most of all a fuller measure of fortitude that is beyond the dimension of ordinary men.

I have never known another President, so I am powerless to compare, nor would I if I could.

But I do know there have been only 36 men in all our history who have been called to the agony and the glory and the sky-tall summit that is called the President of the United States.

I do know the 36th President, the son of a tenant farmer. He is a sensitive man, a cultivated man, a warmhearted and extraordinary man. I have watched him every hour of every day since his accession to the

Presidency and somehow the full spirit of the man never seems to be captured. It is as if the observer sees but one side of him, the other sides dimly glimpsed, only half illuminated.

He came to the Presidency possibly the most experienced and best trained of any Chief Executive. A State administrator of the National Youth Administration when he was only 28—24 years a Congressman and Senator—for 8 years the leader of the Democratic Party in the Senate and for 6 years, the second most powerful man in all the Nation as majority leader in the Senate. For 3 years Vice President, and then in the shock and disbelief of what is still an incredible minute in American history, he became President.

I shall never forget that day. He sat in the cabin of *Air Force 1*, a scant few minutes after the assassination, solemn, grim, his face an unyielding mask. All around him everyone was in various states of shock, nearing collapse. But the new President sat there, like a large gray stone mountain, untouched by fear or frenzy, from whom everyone began to draw strength. The Nation may have tilted and trembled and the light of the country may have flickered, but the flame could not go out for though the President was dead, the President lived. The Nation would go on, as it had to, as it must, and those around the new President watched him and took heart.

He reached for a glass of water and his hand was steady, not even a tremor to mar a confidence. He began to give orders in clear, audible tones, yet the voice was soft, the words unhurried. And suddenly, as though the darkness of the cave confided its fears to the trail of light growing larger as it banished the night, the Nation's breath, held tightly in its breast, began to ease and across the land the people began to move again.

And so it was that in the middle life of the Republic, the country was tormented, but it never lost its purpose.

Since I have been in the White House, my notions of what a President ought to be and ought to have, have undergone some change. It's a game any number can play, to find the answer to the questions: What are the qualifications of a great President?

I judge those assets to be three.

One, a President must have courage. He must shove into his spine a lance of steel that never bends though the pressures reach the yowling stage. He must have a toughness of spirit that feeds his courage and causes him to do what he knows to be right though the shouts of the crowd try to drown out all his pleadings. He must know, as Emerson wrote, that reason will look out and justify her own and malice will find all her work in vain.

Second, he must truly care. He must have a concern for the voids and the vacancies of those who are helpless. He must have inside his bones a measureless compassion for every human being who has nowhere to look but to the President for understanding and hope. Isaiah is the favorite prophet of the President. He quotes him with relish, and Isaiah summed up the cause of the President when he said: "Learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow."

And finally, the President must have a sensitive intelligence that is married to an instinct for rightness. No great leader ever endured in history without this misty quality called instinct. When all the facts are in, and all the information has been gathered and there is not enough of either, but the decision must be made, the instinct for rightness becomes indispensable. Without it, the decision becomes flabby. With it, the leader peers beyond the possible and vaults over the present, and instinct carries him forward. All visionaries have instinct. Every

great President had it. Out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud and of the thick darkness, the instincts of the President for rightness and justice and history's judgment become a valuable and irreplaceable national asset.

Each day, the President needs these three assets. And each of the days I have watched and heard and been with this President, he has used them with abundance and sanity.

How then, does the President go about his day? How does he live out each hour, facing the problems that never go away?

The President, thank the Good Lord, has extra glands, I am persuaded, that give him energy that ordinary men simply don't have. He goes to bed late, and rises early, and the words I have never heard him say are: "I'm tired."

Each night when finally he leaves his office to walk the 100 yards from the oval Presidential Office in the West Wing to the Mansion's second floor living quarters, he finds on his bed what we in the White House call, with simple disguise, the night reading. In stacks of brown envelopes are heavy packets of material—reports from State and Defense, latest intelligence reports, cables from Ambassadors, memoranda from various Cabinet Officers and White House staff members, budget data, project reports from task forces working on various problems, magazine articles, newspaper clippings, personnel recommendations as well as a selected sample of the day's mail. In a week's time the President will have read the equivalent of a 100,000 word novel. This is in addition to the reading he does in the quiet of his own office. The reading a President must do is an avalanche, a never-ending river of words that pour across the Presidential dikes with the floodgates open.

On practically every piece the President will scribble his comments. A "Yes" or a "No" or an admonition, a suggestion for another tack, a request for more information, an idea for improvement or an order to move out swiftly.

The Director of the Budget once told me he was astonished at the President's grasp of the most complex details, and how quickly decisions were made. The President is impatient with stalling, hesitation, or any kind of shuffling in front of the decision door. He wants that door opened, and activity to move through.

He may read for 2 to 3 hours in the late evening and when at last he turns off the light above his pillow, he falls to sleep easily.

It is true that in his mind is an alarm clock that silently nudges him about 4 in the morning whenever there is air action in Vietnam. In the darkness he turns and lifts the phone to call the Situation Room deep in the basement of the White House. He gets the latest information about the strike, casualties, if any, receives the information quickly, and then hopefully goes back to sleep. No man can really tell with certainty if sleep comes easily then. He's never discussed that with me, and I have never asked. Once an admirer wrote a passage about the great lady of Greek letters, Edith Hamilton, and it applies so accurately to Lyndon Johnson it is worth repeating now: "She feels, like a personal experience, the giant agony of the world; there are not many in this aristocracy of humanity." It may or may not seem strange to you, but to the President one pilot's life lost in Vietnam troubles him greatly. He is visibly saddened.

I remember so well one morning when I walked into his bedroom about 8:30 in the morning. He was propped up as usual with pillows against his back, working on his papers and reading. When I entered, he looked up, smiled hugely, and with great jubilation, said: "They found him—Isn't that wonderful news!" I learned that during the night the President was informed that two U.S. pilots were shot down and one had parachuted to safety. Just before I saw the

President, he had been told that the second man was safely back in U.S. hands. This one boy's life, spared and safe, was precious to the President of the United States, and he wanted to share that joy with everyone he saw.

After about 3 hours' work in bed, finishing up the night reading, the President exercises in his room, shaves and showers and is in his office about 10 a.m., ready for the day's appointments.

For the last year, his workday focuses on problems beyond the rim of our shore. If you were to take an index from 1 to 100, you would score about 75 or 80 on the index for foreign problems and about 25 or 20 for domestic problems. Contrary to the popular notion, the President spends a small chunk of his time on the so-called domestic issues.

Secretary Rusk, Secretary McNamara, McGeorge Bundy, Admiral Raborn, of the CIA, Secretaries Mann, Ball, Bundy, and Vance, members of the National Security Council, members of the White House staff, and, of course, the Vice President, are consulted and talked to both by phone and in meetings.

Contrary again to popular notion, the President is not fond of those who continually say "yes" to him. He thrives on new ideas, new initiatives, innovations, fresh thinking. If a man consistently agrees and offers no new counter arguments, that man is soon not asked for advice. The President believes, that unless a man is thinking he is valueless, and therefore, is of no benefit to the President. But the thinking man can expect the President to assault him with questions—terse, pointed, homing in on the nerve-edges of the issue.

In a top-secret meeting of advisers or the Security Council, the President's method of leadership is clearly, cleanly visible. He sits back, head against the thick padded top of the black swivel chair, in the middle of the octagon shaped table in the Cabinet Room. He calls on each adviser, asks them for their opinion. Sometimes the discussion is spirited, the President listening quietly, turning his head to look at the man talking. He is unperturbed, relaxed. He is not a doodler, preferring to watch the full face of the speaker, absorbing both the words, and the demeanor.

Last year, during the small crisis in Cuba when Castro shut off the water to Guantanamo naval base, a Security Council meeting took up this problem. What to do about it? The talk flew around the table, the President, as usual, soaking up the discussion. Some advisers wanted to do nothing, simply turn the other cheek. Others implored a show of might, to impress Castro with his blunder.

After an hour or so, the President began to speak. We would not turn the other cheek, he said. But we would not use force. Instead, he laid down a three-point plan: We would no longer depend on Castro for water. We would manufacture our own. We would dismiss all Cubans working on the base, and thereby rid ourselves of thousands of known Castro agents or sometime agents. And finally, we would by staffing the base with our own employees, we would deprive Castro of \$5 million in foreign exchange.

One top adviser sitting at the end of the table, whistled softly, and muttered to the man next to him: "Ingenious, and Castro will be furious that we have called him and trumped him." Another adviser later on told me this was a dazzling example of sophisticated diplomacy and shrewd handling of a ticklish, peevish, foreign problem.

The day moves on. Telephone calls, meetings, memos to read, urgent problems that arise and must be met instantly, delegations that come in, ceremonial pictures to be taken, and finally, about 2:30 or 3, the President goes to lunch. Sometimes, he will swim in the pool, usually with staff mem-

July 6, 1965

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD — APPENDIX

A3567

bers or Cabinet officers, then a working lunch, and a nap from 4 to 5.

Waking refreshed, he begins his "second" day—in his office at 5:15. Sometimes, he sits alone in the office for an hour or more, and no one disturbs him. Outside the oval office, there is feverish action. Inside the oval office, there is a curtain of silence, a serenity that shuts off the din and the press of anxious problems and insistent visitors. The President is at work and there is quiet. In the rose garden, the brassy shine of the sun has receded and the sheared line of shadow begins its inexorable march across the sweep of grass, clean and green and flat as a billiard table.

The President, if he is not dining with friends will be in that office until 10 or 11 in the evening. Sometimes, just before he leaves the office he will sit in the small inner office he uses for intimate conversation with members of the staff. There will be laughter and easy talk, as the President begins to unwind and shed the crisis crust that has accumulated during the day. He loves to tell a good story, and as one magazine editor of liberal and sophisticated leaning once observed: This is a side of the President the public never really sees. He is probably the most skilled teller of stories since Lincoln, and their humor is much the same, extracted from the soil and the people of the land.

Once Walt Whitman wrote: "I hear America singing."

Well, I saw America singing. During this campaign I traveled with the President. Usually I sat in the front seat of his car. Down the streets of a hundred American cities—the people came by the millions. They came in all sizes and ages, all colors and moods, holding up their children, thrusting them toward the President's car; they smile, and laugh and wave, their faces alive with love and pride. Their President was in town, and this would be the first time most of them had ever seen their President, and they are vibrant with excitement.

It is impossible to live this experience without knowing that the taproots of this land lie not in the Nation's Capital but in the land beyond the Capitol dome—in the little towns and big cities—along the rivers and the valleys where the keepers of the herald are—where the lifebeat of the country is the strongest and most durable.

And like Antaeus whose mother was Earth, each President goes back to the land and the people for his strength and the renewal of his spirit.

President Johnson, like every President before him, sought this renewal and found it in the outpouring of love and affection, in the outstretched arms of mothers holding up their babies to see the President, in the tears and the laughter of the people.

Every night, when the President would retire to his room in whatever city we happened to be in, he would be caught up in this affection. He felt alive and vital and re-furbished. For he saw in the faces of the people trust and faith, a simple belief that their President cared about them and believed in them and would not let them down. The people knew in their hearts without having to prove it that the President was their guardian and their champion, and their hope, beyond corruption and above fear, living and working and fighting for them and their children.

This, then, is the essence of the Presidency. No President, and particularly this President, can ever let the day pass and the night begin without feeling with overpowering intensity the communion of people with their President.

Once during the deadly days of the Nazi terror, when France had been overrun and the heel of the Nazi was on the neck of the French, Winston Churchill spoke of the French people: "Français, c'est moi, Churchill."

III," he said. He told them not to lose heart, that in due time, the free world would stir itself and relieve the French of their long chill night. "So," he said, "sleep well, my Frenchmen, sleep well to gather strength for the morning, for the morning shall come."

I sleep each night a little better, a little more confidently because Lyndon Johnson is my President. For I know he lives and thinks and works to make sure that for all America and, indeed, the growing body of the free world, the morning shall always come.